RADICAL ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA. AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

CJB le Roux and HW Nel[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

The wave of Islamic militancy that is currently sweeping the world and which is variedly referred to as radical Islamic Fundamentalism, Islamism, Islamic Resurgence, and the world-wide Jihad movement has its remote origins in the Muslin Brotherhood movement in Egypt in the late 1920s. During the early years of its existence the Brotherhood advocated the revitalisation of Islam as part of the anti-colonial movement among Egyptians. The Brotherhood soon spread to other parts of the Arab world where it acquired a more temporal and a less apolitical character as it became more deeply involved in the growing anti-colonial struggle that followed the end of the Second World War in 1945. As a result, by the early 1950s the Brotherhood's welfare activities had become over-shadowed by its commitment to mainly political objectives.[2]

Two post-war developments that had a direct and profound effect on the development of the current radical Islamic fundamentalist movement have undoubtedly been the Iranian revolution in the late 1970s and the Mujahideen resistance against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the early 1980s. Both these events influenced the militant nature of the radical Fundamentalist movement. The current radical Islamic Fundamentalist movement has been described as essentially a struggle for the "heart and soul of Islam".[3] Steven Emerson in his much publicised work, **The world-wide Jihad movement**, writes that "Fundamentalist Islamic terror represents one of the most lethal threats to the stability of Western Society". It endeavours, he writes, to bring about the total subjugation of all non-believers or "infidel" to the fundamental principles of Islam and the creation of a world-wide Islamic empire.[4]

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1 CJB le Roux and HW Nel are Associate Professors in History and Biblical Studies respectively at the Durban Campus of the University of Zululand.

2 A Tayob, **Islamic resurgence in South Africa. The Muslim Youth Movement**. Cape Town, 1995, p. 26.

3 S Emerson, **The world-wide Jihad movement: Militant Islam targets the West**, 1995, pp. 1-6.

4 Emerson, pp. 1-6.

Radical Islamic Fundamentalism should however not be confused with the broader Muslim fundamentalist movement that has been part of Islam since its inception in the seventh century. The vast majority of the world's more than one billion Muslims support neither violence nor terrorism to advance the belief and principles of Islam.[5] Unlike their militant brethren their religious fervour is not directed at the forceful subjugation of the *infidel* but rather at the extension of Islam and its principles among both believers and non-believers through peaceful means. Nonetheless, the impression is often gained that although radical Islamic Fundamentalism is a minority movement, it appears to have the tacit support of the international Islamic community as such, or at least then, a substantial part of that community.

Although the post-Second World War struggle against colonialism, the revolution in Iran and the war in Afghanistan directly influenced the development of Islamic radicalism, it does not adequately explain the reasons for the radical Islamic fundamentalist movement's phenomenal growth over the last three decades. According to Abdulkader Tayob, an Islamic scholar at the University of Cape Town, varying explanations have been advanced in an attempt to explain the current wave of Islamic resurgence. To some, he writes, it is "symptomatic of the profound legitimacy crisis faced by Muslim countries. In response to the inability of secular ideologies to deliver on political and social promises, militant Islamic options have emerged. Consequently, as the lower-class educated Muslims found the higher echelons of state power increasingly in the hands of small and often pro-Westernised cliques, they turned to the ideology of Islamic resurgence as a way to challenge that political control." Others again, sees the current wave of Islamic resurgence within Muslim communities as a direct result of the religious dilemma posed by living in a world dominated by "infidels". From this point of view Islamic resurgence could be understood as part of a world-wide rejection of modernity (as represented primarily by the West) and seen as a "last ditch defence of God". (Italics added.) Finally there are also those who have blamed the current wave of Islamic resurgence on modern concepts such as feminism and Marxism.[6]

One of the most noticeable characteristics of the current wave of radical Fundamentalism, is its vehement hostility towards the West or any doctrine, object or form that appears to have originated in the West. This hostility is directed primarily at the United States and Israel as well as Jews world-wide.

5 Emerson, pp. 4-7.
6 Tayob, p. XI.

An even more noticeable if not perhaps *the* most noticeable characteristic of Islamic Fundamentalism is its willingness to use violence and terrorism as "legitimate" means to achieve its aims and objectives. It is primarily this willingness to resort to extreme measures that has led contemporary Western Governments to regard radical Islamic Fundamentalism as the most potent threat against Western democracy and international stability since the end of the Cold War.[7]

Radical Islamic Fundamentalism, in conjunction with the present day technological revolution, has devised an impressive international infrastructure that is backed by vast amounts of petro-Dollars. The logistics of this international infrastructure are geared towards international communication, fund-raising, the recruitment of volunteers and para-military training. In the development of this international infrastructure, the importance of the Internet, the swiftly expanding international computer-based information network, is rapidly escalating.[8]

From its sphere of influence in the Middle East and North Africa radical Islamic Fundamentalism is steadily advancing throughout the African continent. Present-day Sudan is already firmly enmeshed in its grip while the pro-western regimes of Egypt and Algeria appears to be its next immediate targets.[9] Many Western observers believe that should either Egypt or Algeria fall to the radical Muslim Fundamentalist movement, this could have a domino effect in the rest of Africa.[10] Should this come to pass the world may eventually witness how one African country after the other succumb to the onslaught of radical Fundamentalism on the continent. Present indications point to the fact that South Africa with its apparently opulent socio-economic infrastructure, may not only play a significant role in such a development but it may be the ultimate target of the Islamic Fundamentalist movement in Africa.[11]

2. RADICAL ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Although South Africa is geographically far removed from the centre of radical Islamic Fundamentalist development in the Middle East, North Africa

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7 **The Daily News** (Durban), 20 December 1995: *US warns of rise in terrorism*.
8 **Africa Confidential**, Vol. 36, No. 14, 7 July 1995, p. 2.
9 **Africa Confidential**, Vol. 36, No. 14, 7 July 1995, p. 2.
10 **Africa Confidential**. Vol. 35, No. 10, 20 May 1994, as well as **Africa Confidential**, Vol. 36, No. 16, 4 August 1995.
11 **The Sunday Times** (Johannesburg), 22 October 1995.

and Asia religiously and politically, the country's small but influential Muslim community has close ties with the rest of the Islamic world including the militant Islamic fundamentalist movement.

Historically, Islam was first introduced into South Africa by people of Malay descent during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as through the immigration of Indian labourers during the nineteenth century. It is therefore not surprising that approximately 95 per cent of all Muslims in South Africa belongs to the Indian and Coloured communities. Although there are currently virtually no statistics available on the subject of how many people support the radical Islamic fundamentalist movement in South Africa there are nonetheless growing indications that it is a growing force in the country and that members of the African (Black) communities are increasingly being targeted for conversion to Islam by Muslim organisations in the Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal such as the Islamic Propagation Centre International (IPCI) in Durban. Conversion of Blacks to Islam is however not without its problems. Essa Al-Seppe, a prominent Black Muslim leader and chairman of the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) in South Africa, recently complained that he, his family, and his colleagues, all of whom are of African descent, are increasingly being subjected to racial remarks by Muslims of non-African descent, but in particular by Muslims from the Indian community.[12] Hanan Ashrawi, the seasoned Palestinian spokeswoman who visited South Africa towards the end of 1994, told an audience in Johannesburg that South African Muslims are "the most extreme racists" that she has ever come across.[13]

Since the advent of the Iranian revolution and the war in Afghanistan a number of militant but clandestine Muslim organisations have emerged in South Africa. Most of these organisatons had their origins in the 1980s and were part of the wider anti-apartheid struggle. One of the earliest Islamic Fundamentalist leaders in South Africa was **Abdullah Haroun** (also spelled Haron). Until his death in police detention in 1969 Haroun, who became the Imam of the Stegman Road mosque in Cape Town in 1955, was instrumental in the development of the Muslim anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. This helped to provide the foundation from which the radical Islamic Fundamentalist organisations of the 1980s such as Qibla and Al-Jihad developed.[14]

12 **The Leader** (Durban), 5 April 1996: *Racism charged by Black Muslim leader.*
13 Dan and Eisenberg, **Jerusalem Report**, 18 April 1996: *Plum ripe for picking.*
14 Tayob, p. 103.

Most of the militant Islamic fundamentalist organisations that formed part of the anti-apartheid struggle have turned their attention to the promotion of radical Islamic ideals since the political changes of the early 1990s. None of the militant Muslim Fundamentalist organisations currently in existence in South Africa has as yet openly committed itself to policies favouring the suicide-bombings and terrorism that have become the hallmark of their radical brethren elsewhere in the world.[15] At the same time, there are increasing signs that Islamic militancy may be growing in this country and that this is fuelled by developments in the Middle East as well as inside South Africa such as the country's escalating crime rate and the new ANC-led Government's inability to address the situation.

There are allegedly about six organisations with distinct militant aims and objectives operating in South Africa. The best known is Qibla. Lesser known groupings are Al-Jihad, the Mujlisul Ulama of South Africa (MUSA), the Jihad Movement of South Africa and the Islamic Unity Convention (IUC). The IUC has been included here because of the militant statements made by some of its leaders as well as the fact that the organisation's national leadership has been taken over by Qibla. Achmad Cassim, the chairman of Qibla, was elected chairman of the ICU in 1995.[16]

Although claims have been made that both the radical Middle Eastern Hamas and Hizballah organisations have a presence inside South Africa there are no clear evidence to confirm this. It is of course possible, as claimed by intelligence sources, that Hamas and Hizballah may be operating under assumed names. This is a common practice in the Middle East where factions of the same organisation often assume different names to protect them from detection and infiltration by the intelligence community.

On the whole, however, with the exception of Qibla and Al-Jihad, very little is currently known about any of the organisations or the leadership that constitute the militant Islamic fundamentalist movement in South Africa. Much of the description and analysis that follows below has been compiled from secondary sources as well as interviews with people who have a special interest in or knowledge of the subject. As the title of this study suggests this is at best an exploratory study of a rather complex and controversial subject.

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15 **The Daily News**, 7 March 1996, **The Sunday Times**, 10 March 1996, **The Citizen** (Johannesburg), 29 April 1996, **Rapport** (Johannesburg), 5 May 1996.

16 **The Mercury** (Durban), 18 March 1996.

2.1 Al-Jihad

Al-Jihad[17] was apparently established by Sharkey Gamieldien and Ismail Joubert in 1967. The aim of the organisation was to participate in the Arab war against Israel. Al-Jihad however failed in these objectives and has yet to become a significant organisation for the promotion of militant Islamic Fundamentalism in South Africa. What remained of the initial organisation came to centre largely around the person of Ismail Joubert who is apparently still trying to promote Al-Jihad as a major South African fundamentalist organisation outside the country. Presumably the main reason for this is to procure funds from some of the oil rich Arab Muslim countries. Saudi Arabia, Iran and Libya in particular are known to be annually giving large sums of money to Muslim organisations around the world for the promotion of Islam.

At the time of the Iranian revolution in 1979, Joubert proclaimed Al-Jihad to be the first and only Shi'ite fundamentalist movement in South Africa loyal to the Ayatollah Khomeni and Iran. A massive portrait of the Ayatollah graces the entrance to the Al-Jihad centre in Guguletu. Throughout the 1980s Joubert campaigned for the recognition of Al-Jihad as the only Shi'ite grouping in South Africa. However, the launching of Qibla and Hizballah in the 1980s effectively deprived him and Al-Jihad of that honour.

In 1983 Joubert, in an attempt to broaden Al-Jihad's support base, aligned the organisation with the newly formed United Democratic Front (UDF). As a result of this Joubert later claimed that Al-Jihad had been part of the armed struggle led by the ANC's military wing Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK) and as such to have been involved in the building of a radical anti-apartheid Muslim infra-structure in the Black townships. Beyond this little is however currently known about Al-Jihad. The organisation now appears to be largely inactive.

2.2 Qibla

Al-Jihad's main rival is Qibla, a radical Shi'ite fundamentalist organisation that was formed in Cape Town in 1980.[18] Qibla was apparently created with the

17 Brief reference is made to the organisation in H Kotze and A Greyling, **Political organisations in South Africa**, 1991, p. 87.

18 Qibla came to exemplify a militant Islamic identity at a time when Western Cape Muslims tended to be politically conservative. According to Lodge and Nasson Qibla's followers believe that during the 1960s a group of PAC members in the Western Cape came under the influence of the Imam Haroun and were converted to Islam. It has been claimed that the

specific intention to promote the Iranian revolution and to propagate its strict Islamic principles among Muslims in South Africa. Qibla is led by Achmad Cassim who openly propagates the transformation of South Africa into a revolutionary Muslim state.

As pointed out earlier, Qibla played an active role in the violence and public unrest that formed part of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa before the political changes of 2 February 1990. Unlike Al-Jihad, Qibla however closely aligned itself with the organisations of the anti-Charterists movement such as the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO). The PAC in particular was instrumental in arranging for the military training of Qibla cadres in Muslim countries such as Libya, Iran and Sudan.[19]

In November 1990 it was reported that the PAC was in the process of reviving its long-standing but recently dormant ties with Iran and that the organisation's acting president, Clarence Makwetu, and Western Cape organiser, Barney Desai, had visited Teheran for this purpose.[20] According to Alexander the PAC's links with Iran go back to the Iranian revolution in 1979 when the South African embassy in Teheran was handed to the PAC for its personal use. Relations between the PAC and Iran however soured during the Iran-Iraq war when the PAC and Qibla apparently took financial aid from both the Iranians and the Iraqis. The Iranians, who did not like this, suspended their support to the PAC and Qibla. However, since the end of the Gulf War and due to the growing support for Iran among Muslim Fundamentalists in South Africa, not to mention Iran's renewed interest in South Africa, relations between the PAC and Iran have returned to near normal.

On a different level Qibla's association with militant Black Consciousness organisations such as the PAC and AZAPO has also brought it in close contact with radical Pan-Africanist and pro-Islamic organisations in the United States such as the Nation of Islam. Qibla's activities have been highlighted by the following:

PAC (and apparently also elements in die SACP) have ties with fundamentalist leaders and groups in Libya. (See: H Kotze and A Greyling, **Political organisations in South Africa**, 1991, p. 87, and T Lodge and B Nasson, **All, here, and now: Black politics in South Africa in the 1980s**, 1991, pp. 196-7).

19 Lodge and Nasson, p. 197.

20 **Africa Confidential**, Vol. 31, No. 23, 23 November 1990.

- Support for Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War.
- An offer to send a Muslim force of some 10 000 men to help Iraq in the war. Willingness to support the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in a world-wide terror campaign should it be requested to do so.
- Demonstrations against the US and Israeli Embassies and Consular Offices in South Africa since 1986.[21]
- The infiltration of non-radical Muslim umbrella organisations such as the mass-based Islamic Unity Convention (IUC).
- The alleged invasion of the home of Mr Dullah Omar, the Minister of Justice and Intelligence, on 14 March 1996.[22]
- The organisation's alleged involvement in the execution of Rashaad Staggie, a leader of the Salt River-based Hard Living gang, on 4 August 1996.

Qibla members are seen as outspoken supporters of the Islamic Jihad. It views itself as the true protectors of orthodox Islamic values in a decaying Western orientated society and world. Muslims, they argue, owe it to their faith to oppose any corrupt and ineffective state. The movement's long-term goal is to assist pro-Islamic fundamentalist countries in their attempts to establish an Islamic republic in South Africa based on the principles of the Sharia and the teachings of the Quran. Like most, if not all, radical Islamic fundamentalist organisations, Qibla looks to Iran for its spiritual and political guidance.

As part of the radical left opposition Qibla rejects the present ANC government because it believes that it is committed to the transformation rather than the total destruction of apartheid and the redistribution of land and wealth. According to Qibla the ANC government is controlled and dictated to by Western capitalist interests. It believes that because of the extent to which Whites have exploited the "Azanian masses", nothing less than a full blown Islamic revolution under the control of Qibla is required to bring about the just redistribution of land and wealth.

Although Qibla has made numerous attempts to extend its influence, its power-base remains to be in the Western Cape. Its head office is at Athlone. The current size of the organisation's membership is not known and can only be speculated on. In the late 1980s Qibla allegedly had a membership of about

21 **The Saturday Paper**, 17 February 1996. See also earlier reports of demonstrations against the US in **The Mercury**, 28 July 1995 and **The Saturday Paper**, 5 August 1995.

22 **The Saturday Paper**, 17 February 1996.

2 000. Although Qibla was founded as a mass movement it never attained this goal. Most South African Muslims regard the organisation and its ideals to be too radical. In an attempt to increase its membership Qibla established the Shaheed Imam Haroon (SIHF) and the Mustadafin Foundations (MF) in the late 1980s. This endeavour however did not produce the required increase in membership numbers that had been expected. As a result Qibla largely remained a minority-based organisation until the formation of the mass-based Islamic Unity Convention (IUC) in early 1994.

In September 1994 Qibla was at the centre of the protest action against the moderate Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) when a small group of its supporters demonstrated against Nazeen Mohamed, the President of the MJC when he visited Parliament in Cape Town. It was apparently also involved in the planning of a Southern Africa Strategic Conference for Islamic Work. This conference which took place in Cape Town in April 1995, examined ways and means of promoting Islam in South and Southern Africa. Delegates from Iran, Iraq and Jordan were invited to attend the meeting.

2.3 Hizballah

The alleged Hizballah movement in South Africa is a splinter movement of the Islamic Liberation Movement of Azania (ILMA) which was established by Cassim Christianson and Muhammed Shabazz Cloete in the mid-1980s. The emphasis here is on "alleged" because the accuracy of these and other facts pertaining to the possible presence of Hisballah in South Africa could not be established. Christianson, who is a former member of the PAC and Qibla and Cloete who is a former representative of the PAC in Iran broke away from Qibla in about 1984/5 to form a branch of Hizballah in South Africa.

The alleged establishment of Hizballah in South Africa apparently followed a more or less similar path to that of the parent movement in Lebanon from where a theologian was sent from Qum to South Africa in the 1980s to promote Shi'ism in this country. With the Western Cape being the emerging centre for Islamic Fundamentalism and fundamentalist groupings at the time, Kazani set up an office at Rylands. From here he acquainted himself with the sentiments and needs of the local community as well as the leadership of local organisations which he steadily began to influence with his teachings.

His activities in the Western Cape were not without problems and opposition however. Ismail Joubert and Tatamkulu-Afrika of Al-Jihad as well as Cassim of Qibla strongly opposed Kazani's teachings and activities on the grounds that he was promoting Shi'ism at the cost of their organisations and their membership. Like Qibla and Al-Jihad, Kazani drew most of his supporters from the Coloured and African communities around Cape Town.

In spite of the opposition that he encountered Kazani succeeded in developing a small but relatively successful Hizballah organisation with close ties to Iran and the parent organisation in Lebanon. It has been claimed that Kazani's success in the Western Cape was partly responsible for Qibla's declining support in the region during the late 1980s. Several Qibla members apparently left the organisation during this period to join the ranks of Hizaballah.

Membership figures for Hizballah are not available. Rumour has it that Hizballah has had a substantial growth in membership since the early 1990s and that it is receiving strong support from militant elements in the PAC and possibly AZAPO. Hizballah also has a limited support base in Eldorado Park, Bosmont and Kathlehong in Gauteng where it has several branches consisting of dissident members of the PAC and AZAPO.[23]

Many dissatisfied PAC youths apparently joined Hizballah after the failed attempt in April 1995 to replace the old guard leadership under Clarence Makwetu with a younger and more dynamic leadership. Since to be armed is an essential part of Hizballah's militant philosophy, training in combat shooting is allegedly regularly done at a shooting range in Mitchell's Plain and on a farm near Paarl.[24]

Hizballah also propagates the belief that in the long run the new South African Government will become even more anti-Islamic than the previous apartheid regime. Like Qibla Hizballah promotes and supports the establishment of a full blown Islamic republic in South Africa.

Apart from religious programmes and community work which includes food distribution among the poor and the unemployed, Hizballah also observed religious occasions such as Eid. This has helped to provide it with a valuable

23 **The Saturday Paper**, 17 February 1996.
24 **The Saturday Paper**, 17 February 1996.

foothold in some of the disadvantaged communities of the Western Cape and elsewhere. Hizballah currently produces a local newsletter called **Al-Hujjat**. It is however primarily distributed amongst the intelligentsia in the Muslim community.

2.4 Al-Murabitun[25]

Al-Murabitun was established in 1983 under the influence of Shaikh Abdul Qadir al-Murabit. Al-Murabit managed to successfully unite a group of Black Muslims in South Africa under the leadership of Abdur al-Rahman Zwane,[26] a former member of the Muslim Youth Movement, as amir of the Murabitun. The movement apparently thrived on anti-Indian rhetoric and actively promoted the Maliki madhhab school of jurisprudence for Muslims in South Africa. With its adoption of Malikism, Al-Murabitun distinctly distanced itself from the Indian Hanafis and the Cape Shafi'is in the country. In essence Al-Murabitun preached the belief that Islam, as a form of state, should be returned to its original form, which includes the "actual leadership of an amir (commander) assisted by a qadi (Islamic judge)".[27] Al-Murabitun believes that Africans should retake their natural possessions in Africa, with force if necessary. As a predominantly Black Muslim organisation Al-Murabitun has close ties with the PAC and AZAPO.

Zwane was replaced as amir of the Murabitun in 1992 following an attack by Murabitun members on Africa Muslim Agency director, Farid Choonara and his staff, and Islamic Missionary Society director MS Laher, in which both men were forced to hand over money to the group.

Before the 1994 elections Zwane worked closely with the PAC. During his reign as Murabitun amir the Soweto Mosque resembled a battle zone as Murabitun members came to pray fully armed. During this time rumours of attacks on Muslims and even killings by the movement, were rife.[28]

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25 Al-Murabitun comes from the Arabic meaning "people of the Ribat", which can be a fortified centre devoted to religious and ascetic practices and/or to propagating the faith. **UNESCO'S General History of Africa**, unabridged edition, 1992, Vol. V, p. 982.

26 According to an article in the **New Nation** it appears that Zwane was also a Vlakplaas askari in the late 1980s. **Al-Qalam**, January/February 1997, Internet Edition, Internet address: **Http/786.co.za/al-qalam**.

27 Tayob, pp. 150-1.

28 Al Qalam, January/February 1997, Internet Edition, Internet address: **Http/786.co.za/al-qalam**.

Al-Murabitun currently has branches in Kwazulu Natal, Gauteng and the Western Cape.[29]

2.5 The Mujlisul Ulama of South Africa (MUSA)

Not much is known about the Mujlisul Ulama of South Africa (MUSA). According to confidential sources the organisation has less than 400 members. Most are confined to Port Elizabeth and surrounding areas in the Eastern Cape. As far as could be ascertained the aim of MUSA is to establish an Islamic social order in South Africa. This view is apparently regularly propagated through a monthly publication called **The Majlis**.

2.6 The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)

As indicated earlier there is much controversy as to whether the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) exists in South Africa or not. South African and particularly Israeli intelligence sources are convinced that Hamas has a presence in South Africa and that it is collecting money and recruits for the struggle against Israel in the Middle East. According to the Israelis Hamas in South Africa is in close contact with Iran and the Hamas movement in the Middle East. Hamas leaders from North Africa, the Middle East and Europe have visited South Africa on several occasions since the early 1990s.[30] Muhammed Mahmud Seyam, who is Hamas' representative in Sudan, apparently visited South Africa in September 1993 to have talks with the local Muslim/Hamas leadership here. The visit was allegedly organised by the Al Aqsa International Foundation (AIF) which has an office in Johannesburg. It has been speculated that AIF could be a possible front for Hamas in South Africa.

The possibility of Hamas operating in South Africa came under the spotlight in March 1996 after a series of devastating suicide bomb attacks in Israel by Middle Eastern Hamas guerrillas. The day after the fourth bomb attack on 3 March, an alleged and unidentified Hamas representative in South Africa told the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) that further attacks on Israel targets would follow unless Israel agrees to a set of demands.[31] He did not mention what these demands were. Shortly afterwards it was announced in

29 Confidential source.
30 **The Citizen**, 8 March 1996.
31 **SABC Radio News** (Johannesburg), 4 March 1996 and **The Sunday Times**, 10 March 1996.

the media that an Hamas delegation would visit South Africa in April 1996 to attend an Islamic conference. It was immediately speculated that the delegation would probably attend one of two conferences scheduled for Pretoria from 5-7 April and for Cape Town from 12-13 April 1996. The theme of the Pretoria conference was: "Creating a new civilisation of Islam" and of that in Cape Town: "The Middle East: Identity and politics of conflict."[32] The Pretoria event was organised by Crescent International while the Cape Town event was organised by the Johannesburg-based Afro-Middle East Centre for Research and Information in conjunction with the Centre for Contemporary Islam under the directorship of Ibrahim Moosa at the University of Cape Town. The Pretoria conference appeared to have been largely a closed event, with moderate and pro-government groups being excluded from the proceedings. According to some sources the conference served as a meeting ground between die various Muslim extremist groupings in South Africa and their international counterparts. It is also possible that the two conferences could have served as a response to the US/Israeli-sponsored anti-terrorist "Summit of Peacemakers" that was held in Egypt in March 1996. The latter summit, which had the support of the Egyptian Government, was called by Israel and the US to serve as a springboard for strengthening bilateral co-operation in the fight against radical Islamic fundamentalist groupings in Palestine, Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East.[33]

It was however the SABC's announcement on 5 March 1996 that the proposed Hamas delegation would visit South Africa in April to meet with President Mandela and the ANC and the latter's willingness to comply with this request that prompted the widest reaction and speculations about a possible Hamas presence in South Africa. There was an almost hysterical reaction from most opposition parties, the majority of newspaper editors, but in particular from the Jewish community and the Israeli Embassy as well as from ordinary citizens who expressed their total disbelief at the naiveté and insensitivity of the ANC and the President.[34]

The Democratic Party and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) were particularly acid in their criticism of the ANC and President Mandela's willingness to see "everybody who wants to see me, whether I agree

32 **The Sunday Times**, 10 March 1996; **The Citizen**, 8 March 1996.
33 **The Citizen**, 12 March 1996.
34 For more information on the subject see **The Citizen**, 6-9 March 1996; **The Daily News**, 7-8 April 1996 and **The Leader**, 7 March 1996.

with his policy or not". Both organisations labelled the government's decision to meet with representatives of Hamas as an "outrage" and demanded that their visit to South Africa be banned.[35]

In reaction to this avalanche of indignation Muslim leaders as well as the organisers of the conferences were quick to deny that a Hamas delegation was coming to South Africa or that the conferences had anything whatsoever to do with Hamas or radical Islamic fundamentalist politics in general. This denial was also echoed by the Palestinian Ambassador to South Africa, Salman El Herfi who said that he was not aware of any official Hamas delegation coming to this country.[36]

Subsequent investigations by the press revealed that the story had its origins with the SABC news broadcast on 4 March. According to the SABC's National News and Current Affairs editor, Frans Kruger, the unidentified Hamas sources that provided them with the information subsequently retracted this story.[37] Although it was quickly and quietly dropped by the SABC, the state broadcaster never took the trouble to correct its faulty news story with the result that the Government as well as the general public remained under the wrong impression.

It was, however, pointed out that, even if no official Hamas delegation was coming to South Africa, several of the international speakers invited to the Pretoria and Cape Town conferences have close tics with Iran and Palestine through organisations such as the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) of Yassar Arafat. In response to these claims Crescent International stated that while some guest speakers to the conference such as Kalim Sadiki of the London-based Muslim Institute have contact with Muslim extremist organisations and leaders internationally, Hamas was not represented at the conference. This was later confirmed by Ismail Kalla, the vice-chairman of the Islamic Council of South Africa.[38]

2.7 The Islamic Unity Convention (IUC)

The Islamic Unity Convention (IUC) was established in March 1994[39] to

35 **The Citizen**, 7 March 1996; **The Sunday Times**, 10 March 1996.
36 **The Sunday Times**, 10 March 1996.
37 **The Sunday Times**, 10 March 1996.
38 **The Sunday Times**, 10 March 1996.
39 **The Daily News**, 11 March 1995.

serve as an umbrella body for Muslim organisations in South Africa and to act as a sort of "watchdog" on issues affecting the Muslim community. Despite its moderate beginnings there have been increasing signs that the IUC, under the influence of militant organisations such as Qibla, may be shifting towards a more militant stance in Muslim politics.[40] This new development is partially born out by the fact that in June 1995 Cassim, leader of Qibla, replaced Sheikh AK Toffar as Chairman of the IUC.[41] In addition, both the Treasurer, Idris Surve, and the assistant Public Relations Officer, Habib Khan, are trustees of the Qibla-based Mustad'afin Foundation.

One of the mandates given to the IUC at its inaugural meeting in Cape Town in March 1994, was to petition the new Government to recognise Muslim law, particularly Muslim Personal Law, and to have it included in the new constitution.[42] At an IUC mass meeting in Cape Town in November 1995 Cassim apparently called on Muslims in the Cape to get involved in collective mass action to disregard the then Government of National Unity (GNU). Cassim appealed to the "landless masses" to rise and to take what is rightfully theirs and called for the armed struggle to be resumed. He stated that a "Jihad" is a prerequisite for lasting peace in South Africa and called on the youth to prepare themselves for the final emancipation of the oppressed masses because they were not yet free. A call was made on all Islamic organisations to unite and challenge the state while Muslim supporters in the PAC and AZAPO were urged to intensify their struggle for the liberation of the land.

The IUC also expressed its support for Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, the Muslim cleric jailed for life for masterminding the World Trade Centre bombing in New York in 1993. At the beginning of 1996, Radio 786, a Cape Town-based Muslim community radio station, run by Ayesha Ali, the regional Secretary of the IUC, broadcast an appeal by Abdul-Rahman to South African Muslims to "fight against the repression of Islam". Because of the overwhelming support for Sheikh Abdul-Rahman expressed by Muslims in South Africa the IUC planned a special programme of protest and action during the month of Ramadan to call on Muslims in Cape Town to march on the American Embassy and to support daily prayer meetings.[43]

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40 **The Mercury**, 18 March 1996.
41 **The Sunday Tribune**, 9 July 1995.
42 **The Daily News**, 11 April 1995.
43 **The Sunday Tribune**, 21 January 1996.

The fact that the IUC has become home to militant Islamic fundamentalist organisations such as Qibla and the militant rhetoric of some of its leaders, such as Cassim, would suggest that the organisation's current image as a moderate organisation may be a facade to hide its shift towards a more militant position in South African Muslim politics.[44] This belief is partially born out by the fact that in February 1996, the IUC was host to a delegation from the radical Algerian FIS (Front Islamique du Salut).[45]

Besides Qibla's alleged involvement in the attack on the home of Minister Dullah Omar in March 1996, it was apparently also involved in, if not responsible for, the march on the Israeli Embassy in Cape Town on 3 May 1996. Several policemen and a photographer were injured and a police armoured vehicle stoned by militant Muslims when they found the entrance to the embassy guarded by members of the South African police.[46] Police eventually had to use force to disperse the protesters.

The IUC subsequently sent the South African Government a memorandum requesting it to withdraw its ambassador from Israel because "it was immoral for any country to support Zionist Israel, and any support should cease immediately".[47] The government refused to respond to the IUC request.

2.8 The Jihad Movement of South Africa

Very little is also known about the Jihad Movement of South Africa whose spokesperson is known only by the alias of Younus. According to Younus the organisation is an independent body and has been in existence for "many years". It claimed to have a membership of about 500 persons.[48] Younus however denies that the organisation has any ties to either the Middle East or the Islamic Propaganda Centre International (IPCI) in Durban. As far as its aims and objectives are concerned, the organisation has been "assigned to take action against anyone who blasphemes, misquotes, misinterprets or denigrates Islam".[49] In reaction to the 1995 controversy over the screening of the documentary, "Jihad in America", by the SABC, Younus stated that while the Jihad Movement of South Africa had no problem with the screening of the film

44 Confidential source.
45 **The Sunday Times**, 10 March 1996.
46 **The Saturday Paper**, 4 May 1996.
47 **The Saturday Paper**, 4 May 1996.
48 **The Leader**, 17 November 1995.
49 **The Leader**, 17 November 1995.

they would however support any action taken by the wider Muslim community against its screening.[50]

3. MILITANT ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM AND PAN-AFRICANISM. THE AMERICAN-SOUTH AFRICAN-LIBYAN TRIANGLE

Political developments in South Africa and the United States of America have since the 1970s witnessed the growing co-operation between the radical Islamic fundamentalist movement and the militant and predominantly Black Pan-Africanist movement in these two countries. Militant Black organisations such as the Nation of Islam, the PAC and AZAPO have become imbued with the aims and ideals of militant Islamic fundamentalism. These pro-Black organisations today form an important part of the wider militant Islamic fundamentalist and Pan Africanist movement that have targeted Western economic and political interests around the world. They are in the forefront of the onslaught against Western democracy and capitalism. Like the militant Black Islamic movement in the US the Pan-Africanist and Black Consciousness movements in South Africa have close ties with the militant international Islamic fundamentalist movement.

As pointed out earlier co-operation between militant Islamic groupings and the Pan-African/Black Consciousness movement in South Africa can be traced back to the late 1960s when a small group of PAC supporters in the Western Cape came under the influence of Imam Haroun. According to Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson, Haroun's death in detention in 1969 not only helped to exalt his status among his followers but it also aided the development of a foundation for an agreement in 1985 between the PAC and Qibla whereby Qibla agreed to support the PAC inside South Africa in return for the military training of Qibla's cadres by APLA, the PAC'S military wing.[51]

In the early 1960s PAC cadres were sent to Libya for military training which led to the development of close and lasting ties between the organisation and the government of Colonel Qaddafi.

Although the PAC has always accepted Coloured people as being part of its definition of what it considered to be an authentic "African", its racial

50 **The Leader**, 17 November 1995.

51 Lodge and Nasson, pp. 196-7. See also Tom Lodge: The Pan-Africanist Congress, 1959-1990 in Ian Liebenberg, Fiona Lortan et al. (Eds), **The Long March**, 1993/4, p. 122.

exclusiveness and its radical political views were generally unpopular with the majority of Coloured people in South Africa. This remained to be more or less the case until the late 1970s when the PAC's closer association with Qibla began to make it more accessible to the Coloured communities of the Western and Eastern Cape.[52]

In May 1990 the growing co-operation between the PAC and the militant Islamic movement was highlighted when the "PAC and Qibla" expressed concern over the spate of "mysterious" vehicle accidents that had befallen some of their more senior members. Although no evidence has ever been found to prove that this was anything but pure misfortune, many in the PAC and Qibla were of the opinion that it was the work of renegade units in the security forces.[53] This view was reflected in a letter that appeared in **The Daily News** of 20 February 1996. In response to the death of King Moshoeshoe II of Lesotho in a car crash on 15 January 1996 the authors of the letter expressed their concern at the "many car crashes in Southern Africa, especially of those who are politically literate". They pointed out that "(a) sceptic may state that it is the modus operandi of intelligence agents when eliminating human beings", thereby suggesting, without supplying reasons for this suspicion, that the death of King Moshoeshoe, like those of PAC and Qibla members, could have been engineered by intelligence sources in South Africa.[54] In June 1996 a commission of inquiry into the death of King Moshoeshoe II found that the death of the king was caused by his driver who, under the influence of alcohol, had fallen asleep at the wheel of the car in which the king was travelling.[55]

In October 1995 it was reported in the press that Qaddafi of Libya was "bankrolling" a fifteen year plan among Arab leaders to transform South Africa into an Islamic state. The move is apparently part of a wider Islamic revolution to achieve "economic, cultural and finally political unity in Africa". The proposed Islamic revolution has been described as "probably the biggest revolution to sweep Africa".[56] The plan to transform South Africa into an Islamic state was also the subject of a two-week conference hosted by Libya in Tripoli at the beginning of October 1995 and was attended by delegates from more than 80 Arab, Muslim and African countries. South Africa was also represented at this conference. According to Yousuf Deedat, the Secretary-General of the Saudi-

52 Lodge and Nasson, pp. 166-7.
53 **Africa Confidential**, Vol. 31, No. 10, 18 May 1990.
54 **The Daily News**, 20 February 1996.
55 **The Citizen**, 6 June 1996.
56 **The Sunday Times**, 22 October 1995.

funded Durban-based Islamic Propaganda Centre International, and brother of IPCI President, Ahmed Deedat, it was no secret that South Africa was high on the agenda of the Muslim revolutionary offensive. "We are going to turn South Africa into a Muslim state [and] we have the money to do it",[57] he said. These revelations came short on the heels of a call by Qaddafi earlier in 1995 for the manufacturing of an Arab nuclear bomb to carry out an Islamic Conference resolution taken in 1981 that called for Jihad to be waged against Israel *and presumably, Jews and Jewish interests world-wide.*[58] (Italics added.)

The growing relationship between the PAC and the international Muslim community was further highlighted in October 1995[59] when it was announced that Benny Alexander, who had changed his name to Khoisan "X" to symbolise his Africanness, would act as the local representative of Trans South African Investment Holding Company (TSAIHC). TSAIHC was set up by a Malaysian finance group - allegedly with Muslim money - to bid for the financially troubled African Bank (Afbank).

In January 1996 it was announced that the PAC would host a visit by the highly controversial African-American Muslim leader, Louis Farrakhan (formerly known as Louis "X") to South Africa as part of the US leader's African and Middle Eastern "safari" to solicit support for African Americans and to capitalise on the success of his Million Man march.[60]

Farrakhan is leader of the Nation of Islam,[61] the largest Black Muslim organisation in the US and best known for his strong Pan-Africanist, pro-Islamic, anti-White and anti-Jewish views. Farrakhan shot to instant fame in 1995 when he staged the highly successful Million Man march in Washington DC to demonstrate against the "pervasive Eurocentric" image of Black men as perpetrators of crime, violence and other anti-social behaviour. The march has been described as the largest gathering of Black men in the history of the United States and as such caught the attention of African people around the world.[62]

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57 **The Sunday Times**, 22 October 1995.
58 **The Mercury**, 18 May 1995.
59 **Mail and Guardian**, (Johannesburg), 13-19 October 1995.
60 **The Daily News**, 26 January 1996.
61 For a more detailed discussion of Louis Farrakhan's role and position in US politics, see: Robert A Rockaway, **"The Jews cannot defeat me." The anti-Jewish campaign of Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam**, Tel Aviv, 1995.
62 **The Daily News** and **The Mercury**, 18 January 1996.

Before he visited South Africa in February 1996 Farrakhan visited President Qaddafi of Libya. Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam's relationship with Qaddafi goes back to the mid-1980s when Qaddafi lent the movement $5 million (about R21,5 million) for "business projects".[63] During his 1996 visit Qaddafi reportedly promised Farrakhan a further $1 billion (about R4,3 billion) to help him set up and fund a pro-Muslim lobby in the US to "fight the US Government from inside" and to assist "American Blacks -- set up their own state within the United States with the largest Black army in the world".[64]

It is therefore not surprising that Qaddafi is considered by the US and Israel as a dangerous if not fanatical revolutionary. In spite of this South Africa's new post-apartheid Government invited Colonel Qaddafi to officially visit South Africa in 1996 "so that people could thank him directly for his unlimited support to the people of South Africa in their struggle against apartheid".[65]

Qaddafi's intended visit to South Africa was met with mixed reaction from people and organisations in this country. Opposition to the Government's overly friendly overtures to radical revolutionaries and anti-Western leaders such as Qaddafi and Louis Farrakhan came mostly from the White opposition parties, and concerned minority interest groups such as the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBOD). SAJBOD was concerned that Farrakhan would exploit his meeting with the ANC for his own radical racist anti-White and anti-Jewish agenda.[66]

The Johannesburg-based **Sunday Times** expressed the view that President Mandela clearly has a misguided sense of noblesse oblige by inviting a controversial figure such as Qaddafi, who has a well-earned reputation as an international terrorist, to South Africa.[67]

Blacks generally reacted favourably to Farrakhan's visit and the ANC's invitation to Qaddafi to visit South Africa. Most mainline Black newspapers such as the **Sowetan, New Nation** and **City Press** wrote in support of the ANC decision to receive radical leaders such as Farrakhan and Qaddafi.[68] They felt

63 **The Sunday Tribune**, 28 January 1996.
64 **The Sunday Tribune**, 28 January 1996.
65 **The Citizen**, 13 and 16 February 1996.
66 **The Citizen**, 1 February 1996; **Mail and Guardian**, 2-8 February 1996.
67 **The Sunday Times**, 18 February 1996.
68 **Die Beeld** (Johannesburg), 2 February 1996.

that Farrakhan's successful endeavours in the US to establish mosques, study groups, schools and social-upliftment programmes in poor Black communities without the financial support of the state can be useful to South Africa. To many Farrakhan is neither anti-White nor pro-Black but the "Jesus of poor Black people".[69]

The American political analyst Hillaire du Berrier informed **The Paris Match**, a Paris weekly, in June 1996 that there was a real danger of a radical Black Islamic republic being set up in the United States by Louis Farrakhan who demanded from the US Government nine States to allow 33 million Blacks to form their own country. The Government would have to finance this Republic for 25 years as payment for 200 years of "Black slavery".[70]

CONCLUSION

South Africa has so far managed to escape the violent manifestations of militant Islamic Fundamentalism despite the presence of militant Muslim activities inside the country. At the same time there has been a steady increase in Muslim militancy inside South Africa since the early 1990s. While militant fundamentalist organisations such as Qibla, Al-Jihad and others are in existence in the country, claims by Israeli intelligence sources that the ultra militant Hamas and Hizballah organisations may have a presence inside the country, has yet to be confirmed.

Several important factors have until now retarded the activities of Muslim militants in South Africa. In the first instance the Muslim community in South Africa is not only relatively small but also rather conservative. A further important factor that has helped, at least until now, to retard its support for militant fundamentalist politics, has been the country's relatively smooth transition to a multi-party democracy in which Muslims are allowed freedom of expression and association.

Developments since 1994 have however shown that democracy without effective government protection for the rights of minorities may in the long run serve to advance anti-government activities and rhetoric rather than retard it. Muslims live in strict accordance with the principles and teachings of the Quran and are increasingly voicing their criticism of the Government's inability to do

69 **The Sunday Times**, 4 February 1996.
70 **The Sunday Tribune**, 2 June 1996.

more than pay lip-service to the country's escalating crime rate. The liberal treatment meted out to criminals and the Government's refusal to reintroduce the death penalty for serious crimes, because it may affect Black support for the ANC, are rapidly turning Muslims (as well as non-Muslims) against the state.

This development has been highlighted by the **Jerusalem Report** of 18 April 1996.[71] According to this publication the exceptionally high crime rate in South Africa and the Government's inability to deal with what the paper perceived to be a deteriorating situation, are creating a fertile atmosphere for the growth of radical Islamic Fundamentalism in this country. It went on to claim that while the South African intelligence sources are aware of these developments they are doing nothing about it.

The paper went on to say that since Mandela had come to power the crime situation deteriorated to such an extent in South Africa that the police are now effectively outgunned by the sophisticated weapons and equipment of the gangsters. Most homes in the upper and middle-class White areas have not only become modern-day fortresses with high walls and sophisticated security systems but make use of the services of private security companies because they can no longer depend on the South African police to protect them and their property. South Africa, the paper points out, has become "a ripe plum ready to fall into the fundamentalist clutches".[72]

Crime statistics released in 1996 confirmed the view that South Africa is rapidly deteriorating into a state of anarchy. Since a moratorium was placed on the death sentence in 1990, capital offences such as armed robbery, murder and rape have increased by up to 100 per cent. At the same time the ability of the justice system to arrest and bring armed robbers, murderers and rapists before the courts has declined from a success rate of almost 50 per cent in the late 1980s to about 15 per cent.

Statistics compiled by the South African Police Services (SAPS) and the Central Statistical Service (CSS) show that since 1994 only 10 per cent of all armed robbers, 30 per cent of all murderers and 25 per cent of all rapists were prosecuted. In 1989 some 11 750 murders were reported in South Africa. Five years later this figure had increased to 18 983 murders, which is almost double the 1989 figure. At the same time, of the 18 983 murders reported in 1995 only

71 **The Jerusalem Report**, 18 April 1996.
72 **The Jerusalem Report**, 18 April 1996.

6 519 have been brought before the courts. Similarly, armed robbery and car hijackings more than doubled from 30 498 incidents in 1989 to 66 838 in 1995, yet only 8 113 armed robbers were brought to court in 1994. The same applies to rape cases which too have increased from 20 458 in 1989 to 36 888 in 1995. Prosecutions for this crime have declined from 10 104 in 1989 to 8 553 in 1994.

This has led the editor of one of South Africa's leading daily newspapers, **The Citizen**, to comment that while crime may not be out of control, as claimed by the Government, it certainly was not "under control". South Africa, the paper pointed out, "has the reputation of being a country with the most violence outside a war zone and the highest murder rate in the world".[73] Similar sentiments were expressed by other newspaper editors in 1996. The editor of the Durban-based newspaper, **The Mercury**, wrote that "the issue closest to the minds of most South Africans these days is how long they can avoid joining the rapidly increasing band of people who have suffered at the hands of muggers, hijackers, burglars, rapists and murderers".[74] He went on to say that a clear indication of the direction that South African society was moving in can be gauged from the statement of the Chief Commissioner of Police, George Fivaz, that he is considering calling in the services of a private security company to guard the headquarters of the SA Police Services.[75]

Attempts by the Government to deal with the country's mounting social and economic problems have largely come to nothing. Its National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) which was released in May 1996 and which was hailed as the first comprehensive plan to deal with the country's deteriorating crime situation has produced few results.[76] One hears little of it today.

According to a Nedcor report on crime, released at the beginning of June 1996, South Africa loses an estimated R41,1 billion in income a year as a result of crime and corruption. The report found that in contrast to earlier reports, the level of violent crimes is five times higher than the average on the international crime index. It found that weaknesses in the South African Police Services and the Department of Justice have "allowed the crime wave to increase above the level it might otherwise have operated at".[77]

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73 **The Citizen**, 28 April 1996: Editorial.
74 **The Mercury**, 24 April 1996: Editorial.
75 **The Mercury**, 24 April 1996: Editorial.
76 **The Citizen**, 23 May 1996.
77 **Mail and Guardian**, 7-13 June 1996.

Finally, the history of radical Islamic fundamentalist development in the Middle East and North Africa have shown that radical Islamic Fundamentalism thrives best in countries where there is little or no democracy, where government is corrupt, autocratic and intolerant to criticism, where there is massive unemployment, widespread poverty, and high levels of crime. Many of these negative factors currently also apply to South Africa.